

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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OPENING STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE ROSCOE G. BARTLETT

The hearing will come to order.

I welcome all members to our second hearing in less than a week. We're off to an aggressive start in discharging our responsibility to oversee Department of Defense and military service MWR programs. I was gratified that so many members attended and participated in last week's hearing and look forward to my colleagues' involvement today. I was also impressed by the professionalism and candor of last week's witnesses, some of whom have returned to testify at this hearing. I anticipate similarly informative exchanges today.

At our first hearing, I discussed my commitment to ensuring that MWR programs provide well-stocked commissary and exchange stores that offer basic necessities and more at very reasonable prices. I believe that this is a crucial benefit for our military personnel and their families.

The focus of today's hearing is an overview of other MWR programs. These include vital programs such as childcare, fitness facilities, and libraries, among others. As always, we are eager to examine the health of military service MWR programs, and will review each individual service's commitment to providing sufficient appropriated fund support.

We are also eager to hear of progress in establishing standards of service for MWR across each military service, so that military members know what to expect at each installation. While funding levels are important to measure, any discussion of funding is of little value without a good understanding of the standard of service that should be provided on each base, and how that standard of service is defined by each service.

Those who were at our first hearing know of my additional concern about the personal finances of our predominantly young military personnel and their families. Specifically, I am interested in examining to what extent MWR programs may encourage or discourage people to accumulate excessive personal debt while volunteering to serve their country. It is my personal view that the federal government has a special obligation to ensure that the activities and facilities on base encourage these young people starting off in life to behave responsibly. I would welcome any input about this issue from today's witnesses.

We have two distinguished panels of witnesses to hear from today. Before proceeding to our witnesses, let me now recognize the Panel's ranking Democrat, Robert Underwood of Guam, for any opening remarks he would like to make.

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